

Iran-contra update**CIA official's testimony released**

Washington
Duane Clarridge, the former CIA counterterrorism chief in Europe, said in Iran-contra testimony released yesterday that he did not know there were weapons in a 1985 shipment to Iran. His assertions drew sharp questioning of his memory from panel members.

In the face of documentary evidence and the testimony of others that cables on the subject were sent to him, Mr. Clarridge testified that while he later suspected that weapons were involved, he didn't know in late 1985 that a secret air cargo from Israel to Iran contained Hawk missiles, not oil drilling equipment, according to transcripts of his sworn testimony.

He said this was true even though the person who asked him to facilitate the shipment through Portugal - Marine Lt. Col. Oliver North - and the agent he assigned to do the job both knew weapons were going to be on the flight.

The transcript indicated he has been contradicted by the testimony of other agents, also given in secret.

Other US officials have testified under oath that an agent in Portugal sent Clarridge a cable telling him the cargo consisted of Hawk missiles, not drill bits or other oil field equipment. The committees said in June that the cable could not be found in Clarridge's personal files.

The issue is sensitive because the CIA assisted in the shipment without the presidential authorization that would be required if a covert weapons transfer was involved.

In another development, a federal judge has ordered Iran-contra testimony from six men, including a former White House aide, an arms dealer, and three associates of fund-raisers who have admitted to illegally using a tax-exempt foundation to help arm the Nicaraguan rebels. The six were granted limited immunity from prosecution.